



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 25, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes Mr. Costa's presentation today and UNODC's continued support to Afghanistan's counter-narcotics efforts.

We applaud the Afghan government and people on their remarkable progress over the last three years toward democracy, including last month's presidential election. We also commend their efforts to fight narcotics production and trafficking and President Karzai's commitment to make this fight one of his top priorities. The United States encourages Afghanistan to continue its progress in developing the necessary institutional foundations and fully implementing its National Drug Control Strategy to ensure a comprehensive and sustained approach to combating drugs.

Implementation of an aggressive drug control strategy is vital. The increasing levels of poppy cultivation and opium production in Afghanistan threaten to undermine all of the achievements Afghanistan has made in its struggle toward a free and democratic society. The narcotics trade generates corruption, undermining democracy. It funds warlords, extremists, and terrorists, jeopardizing Afghanistan's security. It stunts the growth of the nation's legitimate economy.

International cooperation is key to support Afghanistan's counter-narcotics efforts and stem the increasing levels of heroin trafficked from Afghanistan, most of which is marketed to OSCE countries. In this regard, I want to thank UNODC for organizing the October 12 Paris Pact meeting here in Vienna and Ambassador Zannier, the UK, and France for co-chairing.

Mr. Chairman, the United States will continue both its bilateral and multilateral efforts. Working with Afghanistan and the United Kingdom, we have developed a comprehensive plan for attacking the narcotics trade. The plan has five components, including eradicating poppy fields, interdicting drug trafficking, enhancing law enforcement efforts including judicial reform, providing farmers with legal alternative livelihoods, and holding a public information campaign to highlight the risks of participating in the drug trade and the benefits of alternative livelihoods.

The United States urges and looks forward to continued cooperation with UNODC and OSCE in our shared drive to combat narcotics production and trafficking globally.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.